

Pastor Kenneth Mars

St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

The Holy Trinity (Series A)

June 11, 2017

Text: Genesis 1:1–2:4a; Matthew 28:16–20

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“And the catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity” (Athanasian Creed, 3-4).

What a great and glorious day Holy Trinity Sunday is! It's the one Sunday of the year in which God, as He has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture, receives our complete attention. The God we worship is one, not three but one. Yet, this one God is three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three divine, co-equal, co-eternal persons in one divine essence. One God, three persons. Try as you may, the Holy Trinity transcends human comprehension. God the Holy Trinity can't be put into our nice, neat little theological boxes. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the greatest mystery of the Christian faith (Ep VIII:18).

If you came to church today hoping to receive practical advice or some kind of sacred “do it yourself” encouragement, you will be sorely disappointed. Better finances, helpful hints on enriching your family life, sex, cultural analyses, you name it. God's Word has a great deal to say about all these things. But this is not the day for such topics. On this Sunday, we stop and reverently ponder with joy and thanksgiving who God is. And by God's grace, such reverence will deepen our faith and piety.

That God reveals Himself to us at all, should cause us to stop in awe and wonder. God is not obligated to us except according to the freedom of His own love and grace. And yet because He loves and desires that we know Him in love and fellowship, He has revealed Himself to us most clearly and wondrously through Holy Scripture. And His self-revelation is true. What we know about God isn't a mirage or delusion. God Himself has revealed Himself to His creation that may we may know Him, love him, and have eternal fellowship with Him.

While the Bible doesn't use the term “Trinity” to describe God, it teaches that He is a tri-unity; three persons yet one God. Throughout Scripture, the blessed Holy Trinity is revealed. For example, today's Old Testament reading from Genesis 1 reveals the

three person of the Trinity in the work of creation. Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This simple sentence sets the foundation for the rest of the Bible. God was in the beginning. Before there was a universe, God was there. Before there was an Earth, God was there. Before you existed, God was present.

God created the universe graciously so that He can give of His life and goodness to His creation. God delights in giving good things; and He loves variety and beauty. Have you ever wondered why God created thousands of different varieties of trees, insects, animals, flowers, etc. Why must every human being be unique? Upon this vast array of stunning beauty and infinite variety, God gives His love and favor. This created universe is the beneficiary of God’s desire to give. Creation is an act of God’s grace and love.

This God who is so extravagant in giving gifts to His creation is the God revealed in Holy Scripture, the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1 says that God created the heavens and the earth. Although the Bible does not say “the Father” in Genesis 1:1, it is referring to God the Father nonetheless. The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 3:14–15, writes, “<sup>14</sup>For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named...” God the Father is creator of the heavens and the earth. Every family structure is a reflection of His fatherhood.

I may be getting ahead of myself here but I’d like to continue reading vs. 16–17. These verses in Ephesians 3 reveal the Trinitarian desire to save us and bring us into His Trinitarian life, “<sup>14</sup>For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup>that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...” The Father’s glorious riches bestowed upon us by the power of the Holy Spirit so that Christ Jesus may dwell within our hearts in love and mercy! Wonder upon wonder upon wonder!!

Genesis 1:2 continues describing God’s creative activity, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” God the Holy Spirit was also active in creation; the very same Holy Spirit who descended upon Jesus at His baptism. Yes, the same Holy Spirit given to you at your baptism was present at creation. The apostle Paul teaches that we receive the Holy Spirit in Christian baptism in Titus 3:5–6, “<sup>5</sup>(God our

Savior) saved us ... by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 'whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior...' By the way, did you notice the reference to the Holy Trinity in this passage? God the Father saves by the renewal of Holy Spirit who is poured out upon us through Jesus. This is reason enough to remember your baptism daily!!!

Genesis 1:3 continues describing God's creative activity, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." God the Son is being referred to in the words, "And God said..." God the Father created the heavens and earth through the Word. Every time Genesis 1 says, "And God said..." that's a reference to the second person of the Holy Trinity.

The apostle John teaches that the Father created the world through His Son, the Word, in John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." The eternally begotten Son of God is God the Father's Word. When God the Father speaks, He speaks through His Son. In the work of creation, God the Father speaks the world into existence through His Son, the Word of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The three person of the Holy Trinity revealed in the first 3 verses of the Bible.

Holy Trinity Sunday is the yearly reminder that everything we hold true and dear is a gift from God the Holy Trinity. Our life, physical and spiritual, is a result of the Trinity's gracious work of creation. This is no overstatement when I say that everything about your life is a gift of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Some might object and say, "What about the sins and evils of my life and the world." To be sure God the Holy Trinity did not create evil, not in the beginning and not now. But in His love and grace, He turn evil upon its head and works good through it. The accounts of our Lord's suffering and death give clear testimony that God brings good out of evil. The innocent, perfect Son of God dies unjustly upon the Cross. That is the greatest evil, the greatest atrocity in human history. And yet, because Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, willingly and lovingly takes upon Himself our sins and the sins of the world, the greatest good is accomplished. God and man are reconciled forever through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Death has lost its sting. Satan may be a roaring lion but all he can do is roar. He cannot devour us as he would so happily do because we are baptized into the eternal life of Christ Jesus who brings

us to the Father through the grace and mercy of the Holy Spirit. These good things God the Holy Trinity brings to fruition because He loves redemptively and graciously.

As you know and heard again today in the appointed Gospel reading from Matthew 28, the Lord Jesus commissioned His apostles to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching. That authority to make new disciples comes from the Holy Trinity. Every Christian disciple is baptized into God's name and taught in God's name – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; yes the same God of Genesis 1:1–3.

In baptizing and teaching, Jesus promises to be with us always even to the end of the age. Through baptizing and teaching, Jesus is bringing us to His Father. Through baptizing and teaching, Jesus is pouring out upon us the Holy Spirit who always leads us back to the Son and the Father. On this wondrous day, we behold God the Holy Trinity in all His splendor and majesty as He is revealed to us in Holy Scripture. May your love and awe for God the Holy Trinity be enriched and deepened on this great day and into eternity. To God alone be all glory, honor and strength. And

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.